

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1--61. (Canceled).

62. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunication network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing the telephone call in the network;

incorporating in the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions of the apparatus, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said information packet comprises a message part and a transaction part, the message part being transmitted between the interconnected network elements in response to the call traversing the network elements, the transaction information part being appended to the message part prior to said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit.

63. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing the telephone call in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions of the apparatus, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises:

detecting when an error has occurred during set-up of the call; and

placing a test call being initiated and answered by said communications unit, so that the apparatus can determine where the error occurred.

64. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 63, wherein one of the pluralities of network elements responsible for routing the call differentiates between the test call being initiated and answered by the communications unit and a normal call being placed by a telecommunications network subscriber.

65. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 64, wherein one of the pluralities of network elements responsible for routing the call indicates to a next succeeding network element that the test call is being placed.

66. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 65, wherein an indication to the next succeeding network element that the test call is being placed comprises a signal contained within a second message.

67. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing a telephone call in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus;

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit; and

recognizing and responding to speech in communication with said communications unit, so that a customer may communicate with a telecommunications provider in an interactive manner.

68. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 67, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises provides the customer with new services in response to the interactive communication.

69. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunication network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing the call in the

network;

incorporating into the network, a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network, a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said communications unit communicates with a work station managed by a case worker, the case worker simultaneously interacting with said communications unit, the plurality of interconnected network elements, and a customer of the telecommunications provider simultaneously.

70. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telephone network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing the call in the network;

incorporating into the network, a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network, a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises placing a test call being initiated and answered by said communications unit, the test call being placed when a telecommunications customer requests billing verification information.

71. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in the network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing the call in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said database comprises a data table containing a list of numbers identifying phone numbers of calling parties which have been marked for fraud.

72. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 71, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises determining whether a calling party's phone number has been marked for fraud.

73. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing calls in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus; incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said database comprises a data table containing a list of numbers identifying phone numbers of calling parties which have been marked for accumulated billing charges.

74. (New) The method for servicing a telephone call according to claim 72, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises determining whether a calling party's phone number has been marked for accumulated billing charges.

75. (New) A method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;

storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing calls in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises detecting patterns of abuse of the telecommunications network.

76. (New) Method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

- installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;
- storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;
- preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing calls in the network;
- incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;
- incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises collecting data representing calling activity at each of the plurality of interconnected network elements.

77. (New) Method for servicing a telephone call made in a telecommunications network, comprising:

- installing an interconnect bus in a telecommunications network;
- storing processing and routing information relating to the telephone call in a database, said database in communication with said interconnect bus;

preparing a plurality of instructions specifying functions for servicing a call in the network;

incorporating into the network a processor in communication with said interconnect bus;

incorporating into the network a communications unit in communication with a plurality of interconnected network elements in the telecommunications network and in communication with said interconnect bus; and

forming in the network an information packet associated with the telephone call, said information packet containing data which supports one of the functions, said information packet being transmitted from at least one of the plurality of interconnected network elements to said communications unit, wherein said plurality of instructions comprises preparing a call detail record for the call based on the data contained in said information packet.